Rupturing Tranquility in the Nile Galaxy: Rhodonite's Dimensional Disturbance, Catra's Jealousy, and Pearl's Memoryscape

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Rupturing Tranquility in the Nile Galaxy: Rhodonite's Dimensional Disturbance, Catra's Jealousy, and Pearl's Memoryscape

by lefemmerouge

Summary

Dimensional travel! Rhodonite interrupts the tranquility of Steven and the Crystal Gems in an attempt to help her beleaguered captain, Lars, and his comrades, fighting off an assault from the Great Diamond Armada. Steven and the Gems agree to help Rhodonite, but before they leave, Connie reports that Catra, Adora's friend (or more than a friend) from beyond the stars, is missing. Pearl, Adora's girlfriend, has something to do with the disappearance, but won't disclose it for fear of hurting Adora, despite possible repercussions on their relationship...

P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. is under attack from a traitorous Khepra, in the employ of the villainous Octavian, while Admiral Jack plans to invade the planet of Mayet, and Cleo struggles to ground herself in the new reality, dealing with a flirty Callie. Later, Adora and Catra travel through the Pearl's memoryscape on a journey of self-discovery and understanding.

The fate of Mayet and the Nile Galaxy hang in the balance. Cleo, her friends, the Off Colors, and the Crystal Gems face their greatest challenge yet, facing the wrath of Admiral Jack, hostile Gem warriors, Octavian, and Xerxs led by Khepra. Can the heroes save the day, or will they succumb to the forces of evil?

Notes

This story is set after episode 19 ("Vacation") of Cleopatra in Space and the "Change Your Mind" series finale of Steven Universe. LDD stands for Liberated Diamond Destroyer, RT for Rutile Twins, Peri for Peridot, Pappy for Padparadscha, GDA for Great Diamond Fleet, GDM for Great Diamond Military, and PAST for Peri Autonomous Sailing Talisman. My summary is written in the style of the opening intros to the Star Wars: The Clone Wars series. A collect transmission is basically the same as a collect call.

Comments are welcome and appreciated.

Update on May 7, 2025: This fic was cross-posted on Squidge World (with the same title), where there were revisions to improve the text, overwriting the previously flawed text. The original version, without revisions, can be read on Wattpad.

See the end of the work for more notes

Steven and Connie were having a wonderful time, sitting around a roaring fire, playing music, and enjoying the feel of sand particles on their toes. Greg sat close by, strumming his guitar. Peri and Lapis, visiting Beach City for the weekend, played their cymbals and other instruments. Pearl, Garnet, and Amethyst hummed along. Steven glanced at Beach City. Bright electric lights illuminated the astronomical twilight. They were relaxing after yet another tough day. Trying to convince more peoples and nations to become part of the World Parliamentary Assembly, an institution created with the desire to unite the world together, was not easy. Lion yawned, half-sleeping at Steven's feet with one eye open and one closed. Everyone enjoyed the tranquility. Bismuth was off touring as an occasional drummer for Sadie's band, *Sadie Killer and the Suspects*. However, it would not last.

A bright white light emanated from Lion's mane. Rhodonite flew out and skidded across the sand, bewildering everyone. Lion's proximity to him meant that it shocked Steven most of all. Shaking, and having trouble keeping herself together, Rhodonite explained why she had come back to Earth unexpectedly.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to intrude…but my captain, Lars…*really* needs your help…the Diamonds…they have this huge fleet…and it's trying to conquer the galaxy…please. I'm begging you."

Still frightened enough that she almost poofed herself, Steven comforted and reassured her. What she told them about the Diamonds concerned him, as someone who had reportedly "changed" minds of the Diamonds years ago with the aid of his original guardians, Pearl, Garnet, and Amethyst, and his extended family (Peridot, Lapis, Bismuth, and Connie). While Earth had a lot of problems, he felt obligated to help Lars as a good friend and warrior who would fight for justice. He could not understand *why* the Diamonds would want to resurrect their empire. Nor he, or anyone else, were aware that the Diamonds had concocted the "plan" to consolidate their power on Homeworld.

After Steven pledged his help, Garnet and Amethyst followed suit. Pearl hesitated. She was unsure if Adora would join her. She assumed that Adora would want to explore Earth more, or meet with Carmen, Julia, and others in Japan. Peri and Lapis also wavered, hankering for the home they shared with Utena, Anthy, and Chu-Chu, in Miura, Japan. Steven accepted Lapis and Peri's reasoning, but he did not accept Pearl's rationale, seeing it as flawed. She did not know how she would convince Adora to travel to another universe with her. Ever since Catra had teleported to Earth from Etheria a few weeks prior, emotional tensions between herself and Adora surfaced.

Connie offered to show Catra around Earth while Adora and Pearl left the planet for the Nile Galaxy. Adora overheard Connie and hugged her, thanking her profusely, saying she needed *a break* from Catra. She then insisted they leave at once. Steven held the hands of Garnet, Amethyst, Pearl, and Adora. Just before he entered Lion's pink mane, Connie reported that Catra had mysteriously vanished. Steven let her grab Garnet's hand as she entered the Lion's pink mane, ready to traverse the vast pink meadows within this Pink Dimension.

He promised to aid his girlfriend, Connie, in the search for Catra on Earth after he returned. No one could realize the ugly truth. Pearl had caused Catra to go missing. She would not

openly admit it for fear of hurting Adora. She had put Catra somewhere "safe" and away from Adora's prying eyes, thinking she could work out their relationship problems, without Catra's "interference." Nothing would happen in the way she had envisioned. Once they entered the Nile Galaxy, new complications would arise, breeding mistrust between Adora and Pearl.

Steven popped out of Lars head-mane first, with a smile on his face, grasping Garnet's hand. Amethyst, Pearl, Connie, and Adora came next, as did Garnet. Lars was relieved. On their arrival, projectiles from the adjacent enemy Gem fleet rocked the spacecraft. Their ship had taken heavy hits from the *Trilliant Splitters* and *Destiny Destroyers* which surrounded them. Somehow the ship had remained in one piece.

Huffing and exasperated, Lars shook his head, staring at the new arrivals which had sprung out of his head-mane. "About time you came! All the cannons are firing at full strength and our shields *are holding*…barely. We need to deal with those ships...NOW! We are sitting ducks…it's only a matter of time before this ship turns to dust and we are killed in the vacuum of space."

Steven nodded at Lars' grim assessment. Stepping forward, he used his pink diamond gemstone, within his belly, to create a huge pink shield around the ship. Lars and the Off Colors were grateful for the shield which protected them. Cleo, Khensu and Akila were in awe. They were amazed that someone his size could wield such power. He strained to hold the bubble in place. He could not sustain it forever. Connie looked at him worryingly, and embraced him, hoping it would give him the moral strength to go on. With Steven's shield in place, Lars directed the Rutile Twins to steer the ship to the far side of Mayet. She yelped in response, "aye, Captain Lars! It will be done!"

Turrets of the GDA's starships continued their bombardment. As the *LDD* moved further away from the enemy fleet, the projectiles no longer reaching the ship due to their limited range. Watching this situation, Hessonite slammed her hand on the console. She angrily stared out the window of her *Trilliant Splitter*, where she oversaw all the *Trilliant Splitters*. Not long after, she received a collect transmission from Admiral Jack, addressing her and the other officers:

"Hessonite, Crystal, and other fellow commanders, I ask you to stop assaulting the rogue *Trilliant Splitter*. We must conserve our firepower for a planetary invasion. The records we obtained from the digital archives on Octavianus make clear that the celestial body we are orbiting above is Mayet. It is where P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. is headquartered. Considering it is the only force opposing Octavian's quest to take over the Nile Galaxy, he will come to the planet, I can assure you that. According to the records, he has an agent which sits on the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. council, which oversees all operations of P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Please send these orders to your underlings. Invasion begins anon. Over and out!"

While the other head honchos, understanding the adjuration they took as captains, ended the call, and prepared their forces to carry out the Admiral's order, Crystal and Hessonite stayed on the line. Both loudly grumbled about Jack’s directive. "This is poppycock! What kind of example are we setting for our soldiers to not go after that rogue ship! Who cares about invading this planet, anyway! We should leave this galaxy to rot." Crystal snarled. She

responded, saying "Sure, Hessonite. We need to maintain the chain of command. Otherwise, we will be like Steven Universe and his friends on Earth, ugh. I *detest* those upstarts!"

Hessonite then added, "Fine, Crystal, you are right. Even so, this rubs me the wrong way." Crystal came to Jack's defense. "Say what you will, but Jack is a competent person in charge." Hessonite had the last word. "Again, a valid point. Let bygones be bygones. Onward!"

Back on the *LDD*, Steven dropped his pink bubble and collapsed to the floor, fatigued from the energy output. Lars saw this and recommended Connie bring him to the ship's sleeping quarters so he could rest. She concurred with this assessment and agreed to remain in contact with Lars to give him any updates on Steven's condition. Meanwhile, Adora and Pearl entered the *OCAC*, confident they could face the enemy together.

Garnet and Amethyst joined Mihos, Callie, Akila, Khensu, and Cleo on a ship Akila called *BACK!*, named for four people: Brian, Akila, Cleo, and Khensu. This team would arrive on Mayet's surface in order to counter the enemy's ground assault. Cleo, Akila, Amethyst, Garnet, helped load Cleo's Sphinx bike onto the ship. The *OCAC* and *BACK!* left, one after the other, leaving Lars, the Off Colors, Steven, and Connie, aboard.

On Mayet, the Xerxs were causing pandemonium. Students, running for their lives, struggled to fend off the incoming robots with their quasars. While some robots were destroyed, more kept coming. Professors Khalbrax V and Jurval had tried to lead their students forward but their effort had failed. Both lay in P.Y.R.A.M.I.D.'s hospital, recovering from their deep wounds. One professor, an elderly cat named Sitre, led the remaining unit in Mayet City resisting the Xerxs.

Some students, like Cheval, Dennis, E'Geke-Ek'Gek, Lakshmi, Philo, and Debbie, fled in fright to the supposed safety of their dorms. Misti and Msumaki fought alongside Sitre, as did a number of brave students. Brian and Yosira, holed up in Brian's lab, continued formulating a strategy to defeat the robotic army. They were unaware that Kek and Khepra were both working on behalf of Octavian, each in their own way. Neither of them, both on the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Council, knew of the other's involvement in Octavian's schemes. They would find this out soon enough when Octavian disembarked in Mayet, as he tried to flee from his new foes.

Callie remained quiet and subdued as the *BACK!* began its descent. The automated anti-aircraft cannons fired at the incoming meteors and somehow ignored their ship. Akila thought it would be smooth sailing from there. However, a shoulder-to-air missile, fired by a Gem on the ground, part of the invasion force, startled her. It smashed into the ship's left-side engine, which suddenly began intensely burning. A boom reverberated across the craft. Despite the damage, Akila expertly guided the craft to the ground, while the engine spewed a cloud of blackish smoke.

Skidding across the ground, the *BACK!* stopped, but not before they were all thrown forward with tremendous force onto the landing ramp. Apart from Amethyst and Garnet, everyone was injured. Stinging from the pain, Cleo waddled over to her Sphinx bike. She sat in the driver's seat, with Mihos wrapped around her neck. Akila strapped herself in the auxiliary

seat behind her. Pressing down a trigger, laser bolts screamed out the vehicle's guns with extreme speed. The ship's left lower side exploded, and the bike swerved outside the ship's structure as the vehicle's cannons sizzled.

With the coast clear, Amethyst, Garnet, Callie, and Khensu crawled out, relieved to leave the ship, which they considered a death trap. Suddenly, a legion of Xerxs approached, declaring in, their distorted language, that "resistance is futile." Aiming their gun barrels at Cleo and Akila, Cleo lurched the bike ahead, gunning the engine. One projectile hit Akila's seat, causing her to fly off the bike, and land on the ground with a thump. Spinning the bike around, she prepared a counteroffensive. Amethyst and Garnet positioned themselves around a bruised Akila.

Bringing the bike to a stop, she turned it on its side, shielding her friend, and with all the energy she had left, she hopped into the air, blasting at the Xerxs with a quasar in each hand. Not wanting to be one-upped by her crush, Callie tried to do the same but completely failed. She only blasted one Xerxs, while Cleo struck twenty, in all, with her quasars, downing each one with direct hits.

Amethyst and Garnet cheered. Khensu rolled his eyes. He had seen this bravado from her in the past and did not appreciate it. As Cleo's guns cooled off from their use in the skirmish, Callie took this chance to jump onto the auxiliary seat. Cleo scowled. She accepted Callie sitting behind her *only* under the condition that she not do any "funny stuff." Callie, giddy with excitement, continued to hope for an improved relationship with Cleo, even if it remained a pipe dream. Turning into a helicopter, Amethyst trannsported Garnet, Akila, Khensu, and Mihos to the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. dorms. Callie and Cleo followed in the Sphinx bike.

In space, conditions were atrocious for the beleaguered heroes. Adora and Pearl were under fire, barely holding their own, shooting their missiles and cannons at the enemy ships. Grousing, Pearl realized they had no choice but to release the *PAST*, an autonomous ship Peri created for Lars and the Off Colors on Earth, formerly the *Peri-Jet*, which Lars told her about prior to leaving Earth to be an ambassador to other worlds. Using the tablet connected to the captain’s chair, she operated the *PAST*, maneuvering it through the fleet.

It soon faced a squadron of *Marquise Chippers* piloted by Nephrites. The cannons began booming, causing the spacefighters to explode. The Nephrites were thrown into space and easily poofed from fright. When a ship was obliterated, the console would announce: "one Clod wrecked!" While she chuckled at this message, they distressed her at the same time.

She could not collect the Gems of the fallen Nephrites and bubble them, so she moped. Unfortunately, with these emotional tensions, she did not notice incoming missiles heading their direction until too late. Adora screamed. Pearl swerved the ship. Adora hung on for dear life. Her fancy flying caused most of the skyrockets to explode. However, one slipped through and struck the ship's left wing, causing it to smoke. Desperately, Pearl guided the *OCAC* into a hangar bay of a *Trilliant Splitter*. Adora used the ship's cannons to destroy a shield preventing entry into the immense spacecraft. Without warning, the ship glided to a stop. A company of Peridots surrounded the craft and raised their Gem Guns, insisting that those inside the ship surrender themselves.

A petty officer, given the nickname of Greenie by her underlings, sneered, and giggled at the unexpected visitors. The conversation she had with her fellow Peridots, who worked for Hessonite (i.e. their boss), puzzled Pearl and Adora to no end. They made Pearl furious with their latent hostility toward Steven. "Who are these goofballs, tourists? They couldn't even dodge *a missile*."

Another Peridot stated "Greenie, you're right! Those rockets would miss my craft entirely. I'd fly right past, even if only a hair's length away, like the human hair on that chubby kid's head!"

Then yet another Peridot chimed in. "You mean the vaulted Steven Universe, right? That guy is *so* pretentious. The Diamonds are *sooo much* better, I have to say."

Another green gem being then said, "I can't agree more, my compatriot. I want to take that Diamond out of him, so he can feel like what it's like to be a human boy."

The other Peridots continued their chatter among one another. "Yeah, I heard that White Diamond showed him that, but he beat her back with his pink strength…he's a powerful adversary. I wouldn't underestimate him."

One annoyed Peridot added, "Fine, fine. What do you want to do about these gumba lumbas inside the hangar?"

One final Peridot added "Dunno, but we gotta bring 'em to *the boss*. She will be pleased to gaze upon some prisoners…we can take 'em back to Homeworld for tribute, hehe."

Pearl and Adora looked at each other. Some time ago, after fighting alongside one another with Carmen Sandiego against V.I.L.E., they fused together into one being with orange hair and a slender, muscular build, wearing clothes appropriate for the cold Siberian weather, and four arms, tentatively naming themself "Peadora" after Amethyst's suggested the name.

They also fused two other times, first to protect Rin Asogi from voracious angels outside Tokyo, and second when working with Carmen to lock up A.C.M.E. in a prison in Antarctica.

Even so, *neither* had the appetite to bring back Peadora. Instead, they would fight together side-by-side. While Pearl would usually summon her pearlescent spear, she picked up a spare Gem destabilizer left in the ship and put the *PAST* on autopilot. Adora yelled "for the honor of Greyskull!" and transformed into an eight-foot-tall warrior woman. She had a distinctive style, different from the form she embodied on Etheria. She did not have the Sword of Protection anymore. It sat in the Archives of Etheria in Mystacor, which was managed by former Queen Angella, and was where Bow's dads, George, and Lance, worked.

Inside Pearl's pearl, trouble was brewing. Like any other pearl, she could store objects inside her gemstone, which served as its own dimension. There were various levels, with each one managed by a different Pearl, one on the "surface" and the others down below. To move from level to level, individuals could go through the gemstones of Pearls on that level. As a whole, this dimension served as a compartmentalized databank where memories, records, objects, and more, were stored. The objects, stored on the surface level, were organized

alphabetically. They included a cannon, a carp, a cauldron, a clock, a compass, a cell phone, scissors, a screwdriver, a shotgun, sunscreen, a TV set, swords, caution tape, and phone books. In the past, she even stored people, like Connie, and Gems, such as Amethyst and Garnet, inside in her Gem.

In the present, the surface Pearl tried to categorize an unusual addition to the "collection," between the cat's eye gem and catsup. She attempted to pick up the athletic, nimble woman, about 17 or 18 years old, with strong sharp features, and a general catlike appearance. This woman had large blackish feline ears and wild spiked grayish brown hair. The woman resisted, grinning with her fangs, as her multi-colored eyes, pale yellow in the left, and turquoise in the right, stared down the surface Pearl. She put the claws, on each of her hands out, ready to strike if needed and get what she wanted.

As this Pearl shuttered in fright, she let out a boisterous hoot. "This is who Adora likes now? She left me…and Etheria…for someone like you? Jeez. I guess she had *lower standards*. Now, if you don't get me out of this pris…place, I'm gonna *rip you a new one*. I need to get out of here."

The Pearl timidly answered. "Yesss…I'll do that, I don't want to be hurt."

Outside the pearl and in the midst of battle, Adora then said, "I knew you would agree…look at these weapons…they are so…cool!"

Screeching, the Pearl warned her to not touch the spear. She did so anyway, wielding it artfully, then turning it around and *jabbing it* at the Pearl. She snickered. "Change of plan, Peachy. As soon as big Pearl out there tries to get something, *anything* from of this place, you send me out, *no matter what*…otherwise, you will regret it."

The Pearl nodded. Outside the Pearl's gemstone dimension, Pearl and Adora stood together against the Peridots. Pearl used the Gem destabilizer to poof them while Adora blasted them with her sword. Even though they were able to escape, one Peridot, prior to being poofed, fired her Gem gun at Pearl, hitting her hand. The weapon she held onto, fell out of her hand, hit the floor, and shattered into a thousand pieces.

Frustrated, she realized that her spears would be the only thing that could protect her girlfriend from harm. What she beckoned shocked her so much that she froze in place, her cheeks getting a dark bluish color. Pointing a spear at Pearl's throat, the woman turned her head toward Adora and spoke her two trademark words. "Hey, Adora."

Adora spun around to put her eyes upon her catlike friend with a sense of disbelief. "Catra? Why are you here? I thought you were on Earth…after you came through that portal."

She snorted, pulling back the spear and inched closer to Adora. "Oh, I was, prior to your girlfriend, lover, or whatever you are with her…*locked me in her Gem prison*. I couldn't stand one more minute in there! You have some sort of friends. How can you like her? I don't get it. You left Etheria…and me…for…her! Seriously?!?"

Adora tried to warn her. She cared about her no matter what it seemed like to her catlike friend. "Uh, Catra, you shouldn't be here. It's *dangerous*. I…don't want *you* to get hurt. We

can talk about this more, later…in better circumstances."

Catra growled. She couldn't stand this from Adora. "Ha…you are gonna give me that excuse? I came through a portal Entrapta built, to join you, and this is how you repay me? I should go back."

Adora tried to defend her actions. "I didn't mean that…I *never* intended to hurt you…Catra!"

As Catra began to move away, a legion of Jaspers saw them and sounded the alarm. It blared the words "INTRUDER ALERT!" repeatedly, filling the hallway with an intense screeching sound. Pearl rolled her eyes. She grumbled and gave them an ultimatum to stop their bickering. "Catra…Adora…now is *not* time to argue! If you keep squabbling, I'll have to take rash action."

Thinking Pearl was bluffing, Catra challenged and threatened her. Pearl would not put up with it. Concentrating, she used her powers to send Catra inside her gemstone yet again. Adora stared at Pearl with horror and shouted angrily. "Why in the world would you do that! What is wrong with you? After everything, I trusted you! *WHY?"*

Pearl tried to explain why she sent her inside the pearl. "I…wanted to protect you…If you think *you* can calm her down, Dor, I'll send you inside my gem. I have some important memories…and items there, which I need protected."

Adora accepted this, but was not happy. She wanted clear communication beyond anything else. "Fine. After this is all over, we *need* to discuss our relationship...Stay safe, P. And… please avoid getting captured."

Pearl cheekily responded with a few words. "Can do, *sweetie*!"

Despite her seething anger toward Pearl, Adora still gave her a peck on the cheek. She transformed out of her She-Ra form and let Pearl bring her inside the gemstone dimension. When she arrived, she saw a fuming Catra, who wanted to ruin everything in an act of revenge. When her eyes met with Adora's, she looked up with glee and began chuckling.

"We have got ourselves in quite a predicament. Did she send you to *babysit me*?"

Twirling her hair with a finger, Adora responded to her curt question. "Uh…not really...It was my choice to come here. I love her and I wanted to make sure you are okay. I *still* care about you."

"That's quite a choice you made…" Catra stopped in mid-speech and challenged her reasoning, "back up a second. You care about *me*? Why? Isn't she your gf? What I am I to *you*?"

Adora pondered her questions and possible answers. She stuttered a little and began to answer calmly. "I care because you are my childhood friend…we have a shared history together. Yes, I love Pearl and we share an important bond together, but *you will always* mean something to me…I'm not sure how to describe it."

Catra beamed back, while words escaped her. She grimaced and punched the Pearl, turning to Adora and saying, "I'm *not* doing this because I like you."

Grinning back, she whispered in Catra's ear, asking her where she wanted to go. Thinking it over, she mouthed a few words. "I want to know *why* you are so close to this Pearl fellow and why you think I am special."

Even with the possible discomfort, Adora agreed in an effort to be open about her feelings. She expected it would relax Catra. She also wanted Catra to realize *why* she felt the way she did about Pearl. She spoke to the Surface Pearl, dizzy from the beating Catra had handed her. "Okay, Pearl, let's look at some memories!"

The Surface Pearl responded matter-of-factly. "Certainly. I will send you to the Memory Core. You can speak with the Pearl who calls herself 'MC-Pearl,' there. She'll hook you up with all the right memories. Please, don’t hurt me again!"

Adora chuckled. She didn't know why the Pearl acted like this. "P, I won't, and I never would! I will *make sure* Catra doesn't either. When we need to go back, can we go through the Pearl...on that level?"

The Surface Pearl snickered. She was proud of herself. "Why, yes! It's all highly organized! We have gigantic pneumatic tubes which can transport you across this dimension, but I recommend going through the head Pearl at each level instead. Moving through the tubes isn't as fast as pearl-to-pearl travel."

Adora nodded. "Understood, P. Thanks for your help."

The Surface Pearl then stated, "You're welcome, fellow traveler, uh, Adora and the Catra I've heard so much about…"

Adora cut her off and sheepishly laughed, not wanting to say anything more about Catra. "Yeah, yeah, can we go now?"

The surface Pearl grinned and thanked them. "As the surface Pearl, I'm more than glad to offer my services…Take a deep breath and you'll be in the Memory Core in no time."

With a flash of white light, Adora and Catra opened their eyes. A room filled with drawers upon drawers of file cabinets, and computer monitors, allowed for easy searching of memories in front of them. While digital technology seemed to be the standard of repositories, Pearl liked the feel of card catalogs. Steven had not visited this room when he entered Pearl's gemstone. The pathway through Pearl’s memories was different then. After that experience, Pearl used her Gem abilities to direct the Pearls inside to reorganize it and create a Memory Core for safekeeping. These efforts would all be for naught if Pearl's gemstone cracked, as it would be game over for the memories, items, and anyone inside.

Adora cleared her throat and spoke to the MC-Pearl, which she called herself, standing for her full name, Memory Core Pearl, and serving as a commentary on her coolness. "Hello! We'd like to watch…er *observe* some memories of Pearl and myself."

The MC-Pearl smiled and replied, instantly recognizing Adora from the hours and hours of the memories stored within the core she had watched. "Certainly, Ms. Adora! I'll pull them up for you, right away," adding, "you are so cute in these memories. I understand why the big boss Pearl *fell for you*." Adora's face reddened, her body began to tingle, and her body began moving awkwardly. As a tear fell down her face, the MC-Pearl waved them adieu.

She could retrieved the moment that their friendship began, how they flirted with each other in Mystacor, or when she was jealous of Adora for her crush on Carmen. Back then, she fled to the Strawberry Battlefield and Steven comforted her, learning how much Adora meant to her. The same could be said about the time Lapis and Peri flustered her when they talked about their relationship, Pearl's anger at Adora for drinking vodka with Mimi and Rin, and Pearl's defense of Adora from a ship piloted by Bonnie and Marcy. She *did not* pull up these memories.

Instead, MC-Pearl picked some of Pearl and Adora's *best times* together. Pearl and Catra could watch these memories but *could not* alter the memoryscape.

The first memory came from the time Pearl and Adora snuck away at night, walking through the Whispering Woods to a rock outcropping overlooking a lake. As Adora watched herself hold Pearl's hands tightly, she whispered "aw" as she heard the dialog between them, while Catra rolled her eyes.

> "I really admire you, Pearl, your elegance, knack for organization and order, and your inspirational talks. Bow and Glimmer are nice and all, but you are really a friend I wish I had known sooner. I wish you could stay here forever."
>
> *Pearl was flattered but was cautious. They had only recently met and because of this, they did not know each other that well yet. That was the word of warning that she gave Adora, while remaining supportive and blushing at her praise.* "I'm glad that you like those qualities and see me as a true friend...but we barely know each other...Garnet says love is something that grows over time, not something that happens instantly or quickly. The same is the case for friendship."
>
> *While Adora was a bit dismayed, she was glad that Pearl acknowledged her feelings, even if she only saw her as a friend. She moved over to Pearl and proceeded to hug her, excited that they saw each other eye-to-eye on this connection. She cried a little when telling Pearl what she felt at that time.* "You are so interesting and fascinating...and I want to get to know you better...I want us to be the best of friends!"

While watching this play out, Adora cried, remembering her dismay back then, but glad that Pearl understood her feelings, bawling when she saw them cuddling. She snickered when they shouted, "Pearl and Adora together...we are Peadora united!" Catra had never seen Adora like this, and silently cheered on Adora's new maturity. She wondered if *she* could have intimacy like that in her life. She became jealous, resulting in a weird fascination with the memories, wanting to see more. After the memory stopped playing, Adora slid over to Catra and popped a question. She wanted to know if Catra was still okay with this. Catra, wanting to mend the friendship, or whatever she had, with Adora, and captivated by the memories, bobbed her head, and *agreed*. Adora gladly communicated Catra's assent to the MC-Pearl, who plopped them into another memory.

Unlike the last one, this took place right after she arrived on Earth and left Etheria. Adora watched as she and Pearl sat near Steven's Beach House, enjoying the bright yellows and oranges of the Earth sunset. She could recall the emotions that flowed through her at that moment. She repeated her own words as heard them, "Isn't it beautiful, Pearl? I'm so glad to be here on this planet with you." She cried, and cried, watching herself and Pearl squeeze each other, and enjoy an intimate moment. As the memory faded away, Catra requested a break, starting to recognize why Adora and Pearl were so close. She sighed and posed a question to Adora. "So, you left Etheria to be with her and enjoy that gorgeous sunset? That wouldn't be enough for me…there would have to be something more."

Adora chuckled. "Of course, there wasn't all of it, Catra. These memories are only snapshots of our best times together."

Despite Catra being dismissive, Adora decided to continue, with Catra resigning herself to it. The next memory selected by MC-Pearl had special meaning. Catra and Adora were transported to a part of the memoryscape resembling the cold reaches of Siberia where the memory took place. Catra, in her orange leotard tank top and reddish-violet leggings, shivered when she stared at the snow and saw the wind whipping around.

She began to get jittery when watching Pearl flirting with Adora and their dance together. After noticing Adora's dance moves were the *same ones* she used at the Princess Prom, she became more annoyed. Suddenly, a burst of intense color almost blinded her. She opened her eyes, feasting them on the Pearl-Adora fusion with shock and bewilderment. Before moving onto another memory, she asked for clarification. "What the heck just happened? Why can't *we* do it?"

Adora giggled. She tried to simply explain it to Catra. "It's fusion. It's when two people come together and turn into one person. We can't do it because we don't have Gems, but someone like Pearl or any of her friends who have gemstones in their bodies can do it. So, answering your last question, no, humanoids can't fuse with each other, *only* with another Gem."

Catra still did not get it. "So, fusion is like sex?"

Adora breathed deeply and took the question in stride. "No, no, no. It can be between people who are friends or people who love each other. There's a lot of emotions involved in it, but it's *not sex*…it's a manifestation of a relationship or friendship between two…or more…people."

Although Adora's words made sense to her, she grumbled and worried about what memory MC-Pearl would choose for them next. Only her fascination for the memories kept her going.

Adora and Catra were whisked off to a bright, sunny location, another manifestation of the memoryscape. It was the beach near the Beach House where Steven (and the Gems) lived, after Adora's date with Carmen in the incorrectly named Tampa Lagoon. Adora and Pearl sat together, as the ocean waves washed over the sand. Adora focused on Pearl's words, *repeating everything* she said about their relationship, especially when she poured her heart out, and expressed her feelings:

"I had a realization which I had been afraid to admit because I had *a fear of losing you*… as you know, the last person dear to my heart, Rose, *left me* for a long-haired human…a feeling of loss that still resides within me…although I have recovered from it, sometimes it resurfaces in moments of pain and anguish."

She then said the line which sealed the deal: "Having said all that...there's something I need to get off my chest and state loudly...and proudly...I...*LOVE you*, Adora!"

Relieved, she reciprocated her feelings, completely. "Pearl…I *love you* too! I…"

Pearl came close and whispered the words, "hush now…let's enjoy this moment."

Catra watched in shock as she saw the passionate kiss between Pearl and Adora as their hair blew in the breeze. After this, they stared into the night sky and gazed up at the moon together. She thought that this was real. This illusion broke apart when she turned her head, seeing Adora sitting next to her, enthralled by the memory. She began thinking to herself, *what am I thinking? Am I jealous? I should be supportive of what she has. I'll never have that.*

MC-Pearl announced that she had one final memory she wanted to show them. Adora was giddy with excitement while Catra feigned interest, tired of seeing all the memories as her fascination with them began to wane. Without notice, the memory began. Catra took a deep breath. She saw Adora and Pearl traveling across the Earth, using warp pads, checking for unusual activity. While this memory played, Adora began crying a little as she watched herself and Pearl smooching while cradling Pearl in her arms.

When the dream version of her began singing a melody, she cheered, and Catra mumbled under her breath, "oh, brother." Adora loved the song's rhythm, romantic themes, and beauty. She enjoyed what Pearl had to say about her song and their happy scampering through a field of rose petals. Neither she nor Pearl were aware that the other Crystal Gems were watching this all from the Moon Base due to Steven's error in turning off the observation orb.

Soon thereafter, Adora and Catra were teleported back to the Memory Core room. Adora began talking to MC-Pearl, insisting they be sent back to the surface. This Pearl honored their request. She warned that the "big boss" Pearl on the outside may not be ready yet. Despite the same realization, Adora remained determined, wanting to talk to Pearl about hiding Catra from *her.*

MC-Pearl transported them to the surface level using her pearl. When they arrived, Surface Pearl met them, again, and shuttered, trying to be friendly, hoping it would prevent further conflict. "So, how was your time in the memory core? Did you resolve your…uh…issues?"

Adora then said, "Nice. I loved watching those memories again."

Catra demurred, saying she agreed with Adora this *one time*. "I-I-I agree with Adora. I get why they like each other so much. I *wish* I had something like that in my life."

The surface Pearl smiled. "As a person with markings of a tabby cat, a feline headpiece, and your…whole look…*I get it*! Big boss Pearl is the best matchmaker around!"

Catra rolled her eyes and easily brushed it off. "Uh…no thanks. I'll figure it out on my own." She *wanted* assistance in that department but thought that questioning her about it would be perceived as "weak," and it would expose her to vulnerabilities. She did know that the surface Pearl lied to her. Even though she had learned a lot from her relationship with Adora, generally, Pearl *did not* have good advice when it came to the relationship department due to her often low self-esteem. The surface Pearl huffed and declared, "fine! Suit yourself!"

Luckily for them, the situation outside Pearl's gemstone dimension had degraded to such a point that she *needed* Adora and Catra to aid her. She instructed the Pearls inside her gemstone dimension to supply them with weapons. The surface Pearl, who served as the gatekeeper in relaying requests to the other subservient Pearls, received the order. She handed a straight sword to Adora and a shotgun to Catra.

Without warning, Adora and Catra were called forth by Pearl, away from memories and things of the past. Lasers whizzed over their heads, nearly killing them both on arrival in the "real world." Using her She-Ra powers, Adora created a shield, protecting Catra, and herself, from the onslaught. She wielded her sword while Pearl retrieved a pearlescent spear from her Gem, blasting a path forward through the ship's metal superstructure. She sighed and demanded immediate action from Catra and Adora. "Nice to see you both....we need to go, now!"

Adora saluted her and said, "Aye, Captain P!"

Running quickly, Adora tightly clasped Catra's hand. Grasping a sword in her other hand, she slashed through doorways, and sped forward with her comrades. On the way to the bridge, Pearl found an elevator. They jumped inside with only seconds to spare. The doors slammed closed behind them. The elevator zoomed up the shaft. When the propaganda message, about the Diamonds and their quest for an empire, started to blare, Pearl stabbed the speaker with her spear, causing it to sizzle and sputter. She couldn't hear that again.

The elevator beeped and opened. Unlike the one Lars and the Off Colors used to reach the *Trilliant Splitter*'s bridge, Adora, Catra, and Pearl had to traverse a long corridor, where they would be prone to danger. Pulling out the shotgun, Catra cackled as she cocked it. "I'm ready to kick some Gem butt, oh yeah!"

Pearl and Adora were *not* fans of this glee to hurt others. They silently promised, to each other, to confront her about it at a later point. Seizing the ship and establishing contact with Lars, on a decrepit ship floating in the planet's orbit, remained the top priority. Knocking out the guards remained easy, one Gem stood in their way.

She had a light-orange skin complexion, curly pale-yellow afro, red-and-white jumpsuit, white-gay gloves, white-and-red boots, and other stylish clothes. She wielded her pink rapier with a teal edge, challenging them to a duel. She announced herself to a terrified Pearl, determined Adora, and strong-willed Catra. "I am Hessonite, commander of the Trilliant Splitters and this is my ship. I will not accept defeat from pipsqueaks like you! Prepare to meet your doom!"

Adora brandished a sword, Pearl her spear, and Catra a shotgun. They were ready for battle. Hessonite charged headfirst, laughing maniacally, wildly swinging her rapier. Adora countered her attack, while Pearl released energy bursts from her spear simultaneously. Closing one eye, Catra fired the shotgun. Artfully, Hessonite sliced each bullet in half and sprinted her direction.

Sensing trouble, Adora erected a shield, protecting Catra yet again. Pearl rushed in front of Adora and summoned another spear. She blocked the strong blade of Hessonite's rapier, while Catra took potshots at her, crouching safely behind Adora's shield. Growling and snarling, she became frustrated, preparing to go on the offensive. This *never* happened.

While Pearl distracted her, one of Catra's shotgun blasts hit her directly in the chest. She screamed in pain while her form dissolved into her hessonite gemstone. This was a low point for Hessonite. In the Gem hierarchy established by the Diamonds, all garnet-type Gems, like hers, were originally tasked with leading armies, conquering planets, and served as colony overseers. Often, the Diamonds gave them light prisms to wield as weapons, but they were *outlawed* after the Steven-led anti-Diamond offensive all those years ago on Homeworld. For a human, specifically one without a Gem, to poof her, was a shameful experience, to say the least.

Grapping onto the gemstone, Pearl bubbled it and put it inside her gemstone for safekeeping *until* they came back to Earth. While Adora knew that Gems, like Pearl, were only manifestations of light, which would return to their gemstones if "poofed," Catra did not have the same basis of knowledge. Her eyes darting from place to place, she demanded answers. "What in the world is going on? *How*...why…did Hessonite disappear into that gemstone?"

Pearl pulled her aside and began to explain. "Every Gem, like myself, projects a light-composed body, often humanoid, from their gemstone, which can change at will. When someone’s gemstone is damaged, the physical form dissipates, and they retreat to their Gem so they can regenerate. That's what happened to Hessonite."

Despite remaining questions, Pearl's explanation helped a little. She smiled and spoke to her, beginning to respect her a little more than in the past. "Pearl, thanks for telling me that. I want to learn more about Gems, but what you said is a step in the right direction. You are *such a great person* for Adora. You have a shared history and are cute together. I have… nothing with Adora…*nothing* at all.”

While Pearl's face became hot and her cheeks became a bit bluer, as she froze in place due to her embarrassment. Catra broke down and began crying. Seeing her in emotional distress, Adora embraced her, reassuring her that she mattered. "Don't say that! Pearl is my girlfriend, but…*we will be connected* until the end of time."

While this would have comforted Catra, what Adora said perplexed her even more. She cornered Adora, and leaned in, insisting she reveal her true feelings without delay. "Fine, fine, Pearl is your gf, significant other, a lover, whatever you want to call it…but *what am I to you*? A friend? A love interest? A crush?"

Adora stuttered, unsure how to respond to Catra's rapid-fire questions. As she began to formulate an answer, an alert interrupted her thought response. "Incoming ship detected.

Designation unknown. Please take appropriate action."

Pearl examined the spacecraft on the monitor. She recommended they prepare for combat. As a precaution, she contacted Lars and the Off Colors on their weakened *Trilliant Splitter*, otherwise known as the *LDD*, hoping he could inform them about this enemy. "Captain Lars, we saw a new ship enter the planet's orbit and may soon break through the planetary blockade. What should we do? Should we engage? What say you?"

Lars had never seen such a ship, so he relayed the message to Cleo and the others on the ground, hunkered in Brian's laboratory, hiding from the Xerxs. Cleo could not recognize the craft, but Khensu did, remembering records from the P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. archives. He shouted loudly into the receiver, "it's Octavian's craft! *Shoot it down*!"

A couple minutes passed. The unidentified ship was about to enter the planet's atmosphere. Lars' order to attack the craft interrupted Pearl's thought process. She proceeded to press a button on the console. The automatic turrets opened fire. In the Gem fleet, Admiral Jack received schematics of the ship's design and ordered the same. For a fleeting moment, the GDA and the Crystal Gems had a common foe. Although the ray shields deflected most of the damage, one laser bolt hit the unprotected starship engine, causing the ship to spiral out of control and go on collision course toward the planet's surface.

Detecting the descent of Octavian's ship, Khepra ordered the Xerxs, she controlled, to retreat, and be on standby until the craft reached the ground. Cleo and her friends were surprised by the pull back of the Xerxs despite being surrounded and destined for inevitable defeat. They decided to not pursue.

Brian used his technical knowledge to rapidly restore the shield around Mayet City and P.Y.R.A.M.I.D. Not only would it stop the asteroids but an inevitable enemy assault, whether from Octavian or someone else, like the Gem army, otherwise known as the GDM. The latter had landed on the planet's surface, with the Gems, Cleo and her friends, and other comrades distracted by the battle in space, *unable to stop* the invasion.

Far above the planet, Lars, the Off Colors, and Connie, grasping a delirious Steven in her arms, entered an escape pod. The *LDD* seemed like a lost cause. They wanted to join Pearl, Adora, and Catra aboard a *Trilliant Splitter* which had not suffered as much damage. Lars felt confident there would be nothing to worry about with the *LDD* on autopilot and rigged it to explode on the click of a button.

Pearl activated the tractor beam. As their pod entered the ship's hangar bay, Pearl received reports of unusual activity on other Gem fleet vessels. A type of sleeping gas had been released, causing Gems to fall down, and become unconscious. The ship started to move on its own, without their direction, and away from the planet's gravitational pull. Using her ability to interface with Gem technology, Pearl desperately strained to regain control of the ship. While she was successful, she fell back, completely exhausted, and into Adora's arms. At that moment, Lars and the Off Colors reached the ship's bridge. Lars offering to take over while Pearl remained incapacitated, which Adora happily agreed to, while she tended to Pearl. All those on the bridge watched in shock as the Gem ships powered up their engines and vanished in front of their very eyes.

None of them could understand what happened, but they prepared for the worst. Adora brought Pearl to the ship's medical bay, with Catra tagging behind as a loyal friend who had a crush on Adora. She waved to Connie, who sat by Steven, who lay on a bed, weakened by the large energy use to protect the ship Lars and his compatriots had skyjacked. Fluorite, like on the *LDD*, went to the engine room. RT, Pappy, and Rhodonite stayed in bridge with their captain.

The Peridots, who pranked Admiral Jack earlier that day, had followed through on their plan. The computer virus they had created, wormed its way into the mainframes of every ship, including the one that Lars and his crew had set to blow up, allowing them to control everything from a room on the *Pear Shimmer*. The virus spread quickly into all the spacecraft of the GDA, while activating the Gem sleeping bombs, with the sleeping gas spreading through the ventilation system. The Peridots all wore gas masks, so they were unaffected. Prior to leaving the galaxy, en route to Homeworld, as part of a devilish scheme to overthrow of the Diamond Authority and empower the Gem populace with the use of the Gem fleet. The head of these Peridots activated a sequence affected only one ship: Admiral Jack's *Asscher Slasher*.

Admiral Jack found his starfighter screaming through Mayet's atmosphere. Unable to control the craft, he cut his way out of the cockpit and leaped into the air, watching as his ship crashed into electric thorn trees and burst into flame. Landing on ground gracefully, he stood in front of advancing troops of the GDM, complete with mobile Gem drills, *Esperanzas*, and other technology at the ready. He held up his hand, ordering them to stop. He brandished his sword, prepared to take down Octavian for the last time.

Octavian lay close by, injured from his ship’s crash, and surrounded by a legion of Xerxs, led by Khepra. Creaking from the abrasions and sores across his body, he shook his fist and cried out so loud that his voice echoed across the landscape. "I'll get you, Jack, if it's the last thing I do! Get ready to be Octavian'd!"

End Notes

For this story, I used information from the pages "Pearl," "A Single Pale Rose," "Pink Dimension," "Lars and the Cool Kids," "Sworn to the Sword," "Familiar (episode)," "Steven Universe (Character)," "Hessonite," "Garnets," "Gems," and "Light Prism," on the Steven Universe fandom site, and the "Catra" page on the She-Ra and the Princesses of Power fandom site. I used the same general understanding of blushing that I used in the previous story. I was probably also subconsciously influenced by "Inside Out" in terms of Pearl's "memory core." I used the "Pink Dimension" page to again make it as close to canon as possible.

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